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ABSTRACT

This study investigated what professional educators believe are the appropriate bases for judging the effectiveness of the teacher. A random sample of all public school teachers and administrators (N=264) in the state of Delaware were instructed to rate each of 16 criteria "according to its importance in determining teacher effectiveness." The survey instrument included an assortment of criteria: product, process, and presage. The responses of elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers and principals were compared. Results indicated remarkably similar responses between each group. Criteria receiving the highest rating was the teacher's relationship with his class and flexibility. Years of teaching experience received the lowest rating. (Conclusions are indicated; a one-item bibliography is included.) (MJM)

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How Teachers View The Effective Teacher

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Teacher accountability remains the center of warm debate in the public media, in professional publications and in the confines of teacher lounges throughout the country. Opinions on the topic cover the spectrum ranging from the "time has arrived for accountability in the classroom and its consequences for salary, tenure and job continuance," to "the very notion that the effects of a teacher can be measured and reduced to simple figures violates every humanistic conception of education."

Any discussion of accountability in education cannot help but sooner or later concern itself with the issue of teacher effectiveness. For the teacher, accountability quickly translates into an assessment of the quality of his instruction and the concomitant selection of criteria by which one will judge his effort. Since the accountability movement centers on teacher effects it seems only just to consult teachers regarding their views on teacher effectiveness, in particular, on those criteria which they use to evaluate their own effectiveness. We suspect that discrepancies in conceptions of teacher effectiveness may be at the roots of the strong feelings raised by the accountabilty issue and that uncovering these conceptions may serve to modify the approach taken by accountability advocates.

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To provide some structure for such an inquiry, a survey instrument was developed based on the categories employed by Harold Mitzel in his contribution to the 1960 Edition of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research. Mitzel, after examining the types of measures that various investigators had used to study teaching effectiveness, identified three categories which he argued, clarify the relative status of different criterion measures. The category labels are Product, Process, and Presage.

Product Criteria. When teachers are judged by their effectiveness in changing student behavior the judge is employing, in Mitzel's scheme, product criteria. The teacher is judged on the basis of a measurable change in what is viewed as his product, student behavior. What constitutes acceptable products, or changes, has never been made altogether clear. But it would seem that measures of growth in skills, subject-matter, achievement, and attitude which could be logically or empirically attributed to the teacher's influence constitute acceptable data in the product category. For example, under skills, behaviors which evidence changes in critical thinking, inquiry, evaluating, reading, spelling, typing, speaking, discussing are potential entries. For subject matter achievement one might use such measures as standardized achievement tests, end of lesson or unit quizzes, and student reports. Student performances which could be taken as indicants of self-acceptance, of attitudes

toward school subjects or towards learning in general, and of respect for others and their opinions might qualify as affective goals and thus also fall within the product category. If there is some confusion about the product category, it probably arises not as much from the notion of using student change as a criterion as from the difficulty in gaining concensus on what products are the appropriate domain of the school.

Process Criteria. When teacher evaluation is based upon classroom behavior, either the teacher's behavior, his students' behavior, or the interplay of teacher-student behavior, the judge is using process criteria. The process behaviors chosen to measure are believed to be worthwhile in their own right and thus are not necessarily related to product criteria. Some variables upon which teachers could be rated are their verbal behavior, methods, classroom control, and individualization of instruction. Students might be rated for their verbal behavior, attentiveness, and conformity to classroom routine. Teacher-student interaction might be judged for rapport and climate.

Presage Criteria. When teacher evaluation is based upon one's personality or intellectual attributes (industry, adaptability, intelligence, character), his performance in training, his knowledge or achievement (e.g. marks in education courses, success in student teaching, national teacher examinations, knowledge of educational facts) or his in-service status characteristics (e.g. tenure, years of experience, or participation in professional

organizations) the judge is employing presage criteria. These criteria are, at best, indirect measures of a teacher's effectiveness and are normally chosen because in someone's view they are related to, and therefore, predict either process or product criteria.

The Survey

In an attempt to probe into how both teachers and school administrators view the criteria upon which teachers have been and are evaluated we constructed a survey instrument which included an assortment of criteria, product, process and presage. For the survey, respondents rated each of 16 criteria "according to its importance in determining teacher effectiveness." The respondents, a random sample of all public school teachers and administrators in the State of Delaware (N = 264), were instructed to assume that adequate measures were available to measure each of the criteria listed. The actual instructions read:

> The purpose of this survey is to determine what professional educators believe are the appropriate bases for judging the effectiveness of a teacher.
>
> Please rank each of the following items on the nine-point scale provided. Assume that adequate measures exist to measure each of the criteria. Try to differentiate as much as possible between items. Please rank all items

and be sure not to circle more than one rank for any given item.

Use the following scale to rank each of the criteria according to its importance in determining teacher effectiveness. Circle one rank for each item. Low ranks are indicitive of unimportant criteria; high ranks--important. 5 is, or course, average.

Completely unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely important

Below the instructions the 16 criteria were listed in random order. Beneath each criteria there was a nine-point scale, e.g.,

Capacity to perceive the world from the student's point of view.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The criteria and the ratings given them by teachers and administrators are shown in Table 1. When the responses of elementary teachers, middle school teachers, secondary teachers, and principals were compared,

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Insert Table 1 about here

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the results indicated that although these groups might be expected to have different biases their ratings were remarkably similar. The average correlation between these groups

was .93. Respondents on the average rated all but two of the criteria Community Participation and Years of Teaching Experience as above average in importance for judging teacher effectiveness.

The criterion receiving the highest rating was the teacher's Relationship with His Class, a process criterion. The second highest rating went to Flexibility, a presage criterion. The third, fourth, and fifth ratings went to process and presage criteria. The highest rating for a product criterion was sixth, His Influence on Students' Behavior. The five criteria receiving the lowest ratings were all presage criteria, the lowest of which was Years of Teaching Experience.

When all criteria were grouped into the three major categories, the mean rating given to Process criteria, 7.64, was not reliably higher than the mean rating given to Product criteria, 7.26. However, both process and product criteria received significantly higher mean ratings than did presage criteria, 6.43. Judging from these ratings, teachers would depend at least as much, if not more, on their classroom procedures and processes as they would on their products. Said another way, they consider that what one does in the classroom counts at least as much as the effects or outcomes of the doing.

There is, further, substantial agreement that both student growth and classroom processes are more important criteria for teacher evaluation than are non-classroom variables such as

years of experience and community participation.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the survey was the rating given to the criterion Amount Students Learn. This criterion was not seen as particularly important in judging teacher effectiveness, at least relative to the other criteria rated; out of sixteen criteria, Student Learning received only the eleventh highest rating. The implications of the rating received by Amount Students Learn for accountability proponents should be obvious. While those in the accountability movement stress student learning as the primary basis for educational decision making, educational practioners, at the same time, have affirmed their preference for other criteria. Accountability proponents have made it clear why they hold up student learning as the criterion. It is less clear why principals and teachers place relatively greater emphases on other criteria. Perhaps a start towards resolving the dissonant attitudes would be for accountability advocates to determine the reasoning behind teachers'rating of Student Learning relative to other criteria. We speculated about what some of those reasons might have been that led respondents to place Student Learning where they did. It is possible, for example, that a respondent might have assumed one or more of the following:

1. Amount students learn is not all that important. Schools were not instituted to produce student learning any more than they were to provide a location outside of the home for growth that naturally occurs anyway.

2. Student Learning is important and I know what variables are responsible for producing it. These variables are the other criteria that I rated higher than Student Learning. When one is certain about the relationship of other specific criteria, such as Rapport and Flexibility, to Student Learning one can just as well measure the former as the latter.

3. Student Learning is important but the existing measures of learning are too primitive to base our judgement of teacher effectiveness upon them. We attempted in the survey, perhaps unsuccessfully, to circumvent the measurement issue by instructing all respondents to assume that adequate measures existed for each criterion.

4. Student Learning is important, and I will assume for the moment that adequate measures are available for this and other criteria. However, I do not trust an outside judge to use the right measures. For example, an outside judge might place undue emphasis on subject matter learning at the expense of either skill learning or attitude learning, or vice versa.

5. Student Learning is important but there are many factors which influence Student Learning that are beyond the teacher's control. Therefore, it would be unjust to employ this criterion in teacher evaluation. Two teachers could

not be compared using this criterion because their students may have markedly different abilities or dispositions.

6. Student Learning is important but if too much emphasis is placed here certain undesirable methods or people may be allowed to enter educational practice. That is to say, certain educational practices should be excluded because of their side effects, even though they may be effective in producing Student Learning. This assumption is, in fact, a variant of assumptions 3 or 4 since a negative "side effect" would likely be reflected in an attitude learned.

The probability that some rapproachment will evolve between accountability advocates and practitioners such as those teachers and principals in this sample depends upon the particular assumptions underlying the latters' ratings. Chances are very different if, for example, one assumes that student learning is not important except that its measurement problems are prohibitive. Certainly, some reconciliation needs to occur between advocates of accountability and those who are to be held accountable if the approach is to have even a minimal chance for success. Perhaps the next step is to explore the assumptions which underly the choice of particular criteria.

Reference

Mitzel, H. E. Teacher Effectiveness. In C. W. Harris (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Educational Research. (3rd Ed.) New York: Macmillan, 1960.

TABLE 1

Mean Ratings and Rank Order of the Sixteen Criteria

	Criteria (ordered by rating)	Type (Mitzel Scheme)	Mean Rating
1.	Relationship with class (good rapport)	Process	8.31
2.	Willingness to be flexible, to be direct or indirect as situation demands.	Presage	8.17
3.	Effectiveness in controlling his class.	Process	7.88
4.	Capacity to perceive the world from the student's point of view.	Process	7.79
5.	Personal adjustment and character.	Presage	7.71
6.	His influence on student's behavior.	Product	7.65
7.	Knowledge of subject matter and related areas.	Presage	7.64
8.	Ability to personalize his teaching.	Process	7.63
9.	Extent to which his verbal behavior in classroom is student - centered.	Process	7.27
10.	Extent to which he uses inductive (discovery) methods.	Process	6.95
11.	Amount his students learn.	Product	6.86
12.	General knowledge and understanding of educational facts.	Presage	6.43
13.	Civic responsibility (Patriotism)	Presage	6.25
14.	Performance in student teaching.	Presage	5.66
15.	Participation in community and professional activities.	Presage	4.88
16.	Years of teaching experience.	Presage	3.89

Type	Combined Mean
Process	7.64
Product	7.26
Presage	6.43